TIME AND DISTANCE

AND OTHER POEMS

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I love all beauteous things,
I seek and adore them,
God hath no greater praise,
And man in his hasty days
Is honoured for them.
Frances M. Henderson.

Frances M. Henderson.
From her Mother.
16 May. 1902.

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BY

EVELEEN M. HENDERSON

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To

H. W.

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TIME AND DISTANCE.

I WANDERED through the fields to-day
Close-nestled round the lofty hill,
Which stands immoveable and still,
Deep-fissured, frowning, old and gray.
Things near to me I soon passed by,
Hedge, house, or tree, they slipped away,
Till Distance hid them from my eye.

I could not pass the hill! Its girth
In miles is measured. Long ago
Volcanic fires, with mighty throe
And fierce upheaval gave it birth.
The haunt of many a downy cloud,
It seems to scorn the things of earth,
So high it lifts its summit proud.

Its shadow stretches dark and chill,
As though the sunbeams never yet
Had sparkled on the grasses wet.
Its presence doth the spirit fill
With gloom and with a vague unrest.
But give me Time, and that great hill
Shall lie, a speck, upon the West.

And Distance, with a tender haze,
Shall soften all its outlines down,
And smooth away its rugged frown,
And turn to purple all its grays.
When turmoil of the day is done,
And workers go their homeward ways,
Behind its crest shall sink the sun.

I can my lesser woes pass by,
(And from my heart they fade away),
But that great grief which clouds each day
Is ever present, ever nigh.

I see it looming through the years,
Its shadow on me till I die,
Its tribute wrung from me in tears.

When age has silver-crowned my head,
Will Time make my great sorrow less?
Shall I look back on this distress
And wonder that it was so dread?
(For I have heard such things have been.)
Then haste, O days! your heavy tread,
And dull the anguish now so keen.

CHILDREN IN THE ORCHARD.

I LIE in the orchard, a white world of wonder!
What fairy magician has wrought all this wreathing?
Not Winter! A lark sings above me, and under
I smell the sweet Earth and I feel the Spring breathing.

Not pure white the trees, for a pink glow is o'er them,
Like snows which are lit by the sunset's reflection.
O, beautiful blossoms! Do storms lie before them?
Will all this fair promise mature in perfection?

And under the branches the children are straying.
Dear buds of humanity! They are the sweetest.

While tears fill my eyes as I look at them playing.
The beauty which touches us, aye, is the fleetest.

And childhood's fair petals will fall from them surely,
If they are to ripen with bright skies above them.
May children and blossoms reach fruit time securely,
I pray from my heart, for I tenderly love them!

FAILURE.

Despair not, Friend, because you failed,
Nor think your efforts naught availed,
For though you missed your lofty aim,
And left unearned the crown of Fame,
Such failure is more noble far
Than lowlier successes are;
In Heaven's sight has truer worth,
Than triumphs gathered nearer earth.

WHY?

WHY do our best-loved pass away
To the Unknown,
While we, alone,
May weep for them till we are gray?
Alas! no stone
Is colder to our cry than they!

Why do we labour day and night
For coy success
In weariness?
And why, when we have reached a height,
Must we confess
Full oft, we have not won delight?

E'er since the world began have men
Thus clamoured, Why?
Unceasingly,
And all without avail! Ah, when
At last we die,
God grant we may be answered then!

TWIN BLOSSOMS.

Morning.

Twin blossoms, on the self-same branch unsheathing
The mystery your petals closed contain,
Beneath the warm caress of April's breathing!
I joyfully beholding, pluck you twain.
With me you cannot miss the sun or rain,
So tended shall you be
By the same hand that culled you from the tree.

Noon.

A Lady comes, my blossoms fair admiring,
And craves one as a gift. Farewell, dear flower!
For I will grant the boon she is desiring.
Thou shalt expand to fulness in her bower.
Thy sister-bud, left here, in that same hour,
Though far from thee apart,
Shall, to my gaze, disclose her golden heart.

Evening.

My blossom, all the day in beauty growing,
Sets free its prisoned scents, and opens now
A perfect flower, its hue more brightly glowing,
As lovely as the buds upon the bough.
I fain would see again its sister! How
With mine will it compare?
As beautiful, I trust, perchance more fair.

Night.

Alas, poor bud! Thy chalice now will never
Its treasure show to our enchanted eye,
Thy heart must be a joy unguessed for ever.
The Friend to whom I gave thee, let thee die!
Flung far away, forgotten must thou lie,
O blossom, pure and sweet!
Spurned in the mire by careless passing feet.

L'Envoi.

In Life's wide garden many a one is blighted,
And fades away unnoticed and unknown,
The busy, heedless world is ne'er delighted
With fragrance and the heart is never shown.
Had skies been kind and winds had never blown,
Theirs had not been this doom.
I weep for those who die before they bloom.

And some there are, who missing Death's disaster,
In piteous incompleteness live on still.
For these poor cankered ones my tears fall faster,
And fervently I pray it be God's will,
That they may only linger here, until
Culled by His Hand in Love,
In full perfection they may bloom Above!

O! LIKE AN OPAL IS MY LOVE.

O! like an opal is my Love,
  Which many gems combineth,
Where em'rald flashes gleam above
  The ruby as it shineth.
With just a hint of amethyst,
  And now and then a failing
Of brilliancy behind a mist,
  A cloud of milky veiling.

So ev'ry gift that mortals know,
  Doth brightly ornament her,
Though o'er them all she oft will throw,
  The grace that Heaven lent her,
A modesty opaquely white
  Her dazzling flashes quelling,
Until they shine with doubled light,
  Against the veil rebelling.

THE 'SWEET' GARDEN.

In a garden that I know
Is a little central space,
Round about yew hedges grow.
'Tis the quiet dwelling-place
Of all sweetly scented flowers.
O, the fragrance of those bowers!

Honeysuckle, eglantine,
Gillyflowers, sweet-pea and musk,
And the clove (old love of mine!)
Visit them alone, at dusk,
When refreshed by gentle showers.
O, the fragrance of those bowers!

Heliotrope, verbena, too,
And the jasmine there you'll find.
Yet there's something there to rue,
He who planned this nook, is blind.
Flower-scents charm his darkened hours.
O, the pathos of those bowers!

SILENCE.

SILENCE hath peaceful charm
When I, with you, alone,
Slow pace the lawn, new-mown,
My hand upon your arm.
Silence with you is rest,
Dear Friend whom I love best.

A heavy leaden pall
With others doth it seem,
Like weight in nightmare dream.
To lift it, I drag all
Thought from my weary brain
And long for you again!

THE WIND AND THE BANNER.

SEE the banner gleaming,
  High above the tower!
In the wind 'tis streaming
  Bright through sun and shower.

Now 'tis flutt'ring idly,
  Now a while at peace.
Suddenly flaunts widely
  At its lord's caprice.

Floating out so bravely
  In its beauty proud!
Hanging now so gravely,
  Clinging like a shroud.

Its devices hidden
  From a gazing world,
Till the wind has bidden
  It to be unfurled.

So, dear, in like manner,
  You're the breeze to me,
I am but the banner,
  Waiting your decree!

KINDRED SPIRITS.

As some poor instrument will stand
For years in silence, till at last,
It answers to the master-hand
In harmonies all unsurpassed,
Its unsuspected power awaking
A rush of joyous cadence making,
So he alone knew how to win her,
He, only, woke the music in her!

RECONCILED.

Of Heav'n I dreamt, beholding there
A spirit fair,
Which looked towards the Earth, its home
Whence it had come.
'Alas!' it cried, 'I have no joy in Heaven,
For I have left my darling unforgiven.'

That night, men's eyes beheld a star
    Fall from afar.
For thus a soul to Earth returned,
    For which it yearned.
To taste again the unforgotten bliss,
The joy, the rapture of a mother's kiss.

In the familiar room once more,
    As oft before,
It stood, and shed a light, whose beams
    Brought happy dreams
Of his dead mother to the child asleep.
He called to her, though he was slumb'ring
        deep.

The spirit gazed upon the child.
    He woke and smiled.
'You did not kiss me in my bed,'
    Was all he said,
And, at the thought, his eyes with tears were wet.
Then, in one kiss, the child and mother met.

The happy spirit, freed from pain,
Took flight again.
More fit for Heav'n when reconciled
To a dear child.

* * * * * *

But, when the morning visited his bed,
With warm, caressing rays, the child was dead!

LONELINESS IN ART.

MANY dear comrades are with me on Life's common highway,
Sharers of every-day joys and of griefs not less rare.
Shall I lament because some of them know not the by-way
Whereto they have not the key, where I breathe purer air
In the great kingdom of music? Would all had been there!

For, though I love it alone, yet my spirit is yearning
For a companion in rapture, whose delicate ear
All the mysterious harmonies subtly discerning,
Should, to my mind, make what's intricate, simple and clear.
Yet, when a kindred soul's found, the delight is too dear.

Exceeding, outweighing by far, poor human joy's measure.
After its glow fades away is my heart chill and cold.
Poorer, because it has known for a little, the treasure
Of sympathy in what is highest; purest of gold!
Yet, *is* it highest? When Christ dwelt on earth, we are told,

N'er did He seek the more beautiful, richer or rarer.

Joys and griefs common to all were most dear to His Heart.

He has ennobled them, in that He, too, was a Sharer.

Footsteps of mine from His path shall not wander apart;

Sympathy, Love, shall I find on our Life's well-worn highway,

Why should I mourn if perchance I am lonely in art,

And those I love most possess not the key of the by-way?

WITHOUT YOU.

WHY is it that the sea doth seem less blue,
The sky more cloudy than three weeks ago?
The tufted pines, still waving to and fro
With fragrance resinous the breeze endue;
All is as beautiful in tone and hue.
Still down the shore the oleanders grow,
And mock the sunset with their crimson glow.
Earth is the same, yet altered to my view.

This Southern strand to me appears as gray
As England's coasts in wintry tempests do!
I live, in memory, a by-gone day,
When I saw all things hand in hand with you,
Your blue eyes lent more colour to the sea,
And sky, and land! Or so it seemed to me!

IDEALISED.

A Poet once created an ideal,
And found a maiden, whom he did invest
With every charm, and then beheld her, dressed
In all his fancies. Vision most unreal!
'Her lovely eyes a fairer soul conceal,
And sweeter thoughts than e'er her lips expressed
Are sleeping 'neath her tresses, still unguessed.
Mine be the task her spirit to reveal.'

Thus for himself he raised an idol rare,
Imaginary, which he did adore,
Long, long.—Until (O! day of dark despair)
Awak'ning came. The Poet's dream was o'er.
The maid I pity! For she never changed,
And knew not why her Lover was estranged.

ON SEEING A FUNERAL PROCESSION PASS BY.

Long train of mourners, black against the snow,
My heart is with you and your grief I share,
Although I know not whom you sadly bear
On bended shoulders, O, procession slow!
I wear no outward semblances of woe,
And those about me guess not my despair.
But I lament long-cherished Hopes, once fair,
Which paled and faded, and are now laid low.

Dead hopes in living bosoms have no part.
I tore them from their dwelling-place away,
And buried them! Now, empty is my heart.
When you return to darkened home to-day,
And yearn for one who ne'er will come again,
My loneliness you'll know, O, mournful train!

REMBRANDT.

O VANISHED Master, worshipper of Truth!
Who dost to our delighted eyes present
Man as he lived. No added ornament
Dost thou bestow on him; oft rough, uncouth,
Thy sitters were. Not chosen for their youth
Or loveliness, but even as they went
About their work. Yet light and shadow lent
To rugged face and form a meed of ruth.

And we to-day, as hurriedly we go
Through life, and fellow-creatures careless scan,
Might see the self-same light its shadow throw
As background to the dignity of man,
When patiently his daily task he plies,
Could we but look through thy diviner eyes!

DISCONTENT.

Two spirits walk the earth
Whom 'Discontent' men name.
The one in Heav'n had birth,
With sin the other came,
And doth degrade and darken
All those that hearken.

O'er all that men possess
This spirit maketh moan;
Whate'er they have is less
Than they should call their own,
The gifts of God despising
And lightly prizing.

The other Discontent
Belittleth what men do.
'Is this poor effort meant
As highest work from you?'
And disappointed ever,
It spurs endeavour.

Bow meekly 'neath its rod,
Complain not nor repine.
Sent down to us by God,
This spirit is divine,
And leads us ever higher
To Heaven nigher!

A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN IN YOUTH AND AGE.

YOUTH.

LIFE is a joy to thee, beautiful maiden,
Queen of its morning! Thy proud head is laden
Royally dowered with wealth of brown tresses
Dark in the shade, though the gold there one guesses.
Health, through the blue of thine eyes, shineth brightly,

Fearless their glance, though it resteth so lightly
But for a moment on visions that sadden.
Alien is grief! Youth's created to gladden.
Smooth is thy brow; Care has written no story
On its white page, nor has dulled its young glory.
Gay is thy voice and delightful thy laughter,
Boundless thy trust in what cometh hereafter,
Beautiful Maiden!

* * * * *

Age.

Life has no joy for thee, Woman most lonely,
Yearning for sympathy. Weariness only!
Lessened the crown round thy brow lined and jaded,
All the bright gold in thy tresses has faded.
Dreary the records the years have been tracing
On thy poor face, all its sweet bloom effacing.
Eyes have been dimmed with much gazing on sorrow;

Forward, still fearless, they look to to-morrow.
Hope still is thine, and the spirit within thee;
Beauty, which Time cannot wither, doth win
thee,
So that I mourn not for loveliness banished.
Still do I call thee, though youth is long vanished,
Beautiful Woman!

THE INEXPRESSIBLE.

A THOUGHT, intangible as mist
Or evening cloud by sunset kissed,
Doth sometimes float across my mind,
All nebulous and undefined.

But if I try to give it shape,
(This thought, too beauteous to escape,
Which came to me from Heaven's gate),
It straightway doth evaporate.

Or else it falls in chilling rain
Of common words, and all in vain
Would I describe the loveliness
Of fancies I can ne'er express.

SILENT SYMPATHY.

THINK me not cold!
For sympathy within my heart
Lies there untold.
I fear to touch upon thy smart
With words too bold.

But draw thou near,
And put thy hand within mine own;
Restrain no tear.
In sorrow thou art not alone
Whilst I am here!

THE BEAUTY OF YOUTH.

YOUTH's dear beauty which we prize,
Only on the surface lies.
To the young this charm is giv'n
By a kind and pitying Heav'n,
In some measure to atone
For the spirit all ungrown!

Youthful grace, maturer mind
In one human form combined,
Would for Earth too perfect be.
When a woman's soul we see
Looking through a girl's bright eyes,
It will be in Paradise!

INSPIRATION.

PRAISE not this thought as mine,
For, sudden as a flame
From out the dark it came,
Whence I can ne'er divine.

Part of th' encircling good
That wraps about the world,
Mysteriously furled,
And dimly understood!

WAGNER'S MAGIC.

(*The Wood Music from 'Siegfried.'*)

I SIT in velvet stall,
A programme on my knees,
Within a concert hall.
And yet I hear the breeze
Mysteriously fall
And rise amongst the trees.

No melody is there!
(Whatever poets say,
No tuneful measured air
Do zephyrs softly play,
'Neath skies of summer fair,
When wand'ring on their way.)

A flutt'ring sound I hear!
(As when, above my head,
Leaf-voices charmed my ear.
What was it that they said
Unto the woodland near,
And lightly whisperèd?)

In major key, the wind
Doth now in volume grow,
And branches, close entwined
It waveth to and fro.
Yet other breezes find
The first, and stronger blow.

All are meandering
In gently swaying sound.
Now birds begin to sing
And melodies abound,
And in the trembling string
Is all this Magic found!

The self-same notes, no more
Great Wagner had to weave
As those who went before.
But Nature, I believe,
Has blended with the score
Such marvels to achieve.

I wake from out my dream,
As loud the plaudits fall.
No more the woodlands gleam!
But from a velvet stall
I watch the people stream
From out the concert hall!

QUESTIONS.

O, WEARY woman! toiling through the year,
What may this mournful, shrouded Figure be,
Which doth at last to every one appear,
Inevitable, which no mortals flee?
Which waits not till the task complete we see,
But stays us with a cold, compelling hand.
What is this Shadow dark'ning all the land?

The woman answered: 'I, who never cease
My struggle here, but ever endless strive,
Though oft indeed I fainting sigh for ease,
Yet dare not seek repose, for I must live;
To that dark Shade a gentle name I give,
As do all other workers hardly pressed.
I call that dreaded mystery . . . a Rest.'

O, weeping mourner, lately torn apart
From one whom you perchance have loved too
well,

Whom you have so enshrinèd in your heart
That you lost sight of Heaven and of Hell,
What's death to you? 'Against him I rebel,'
The mourner said, 'for he has brought me woe.
He is a cruel and relentless Foe.'

Oh! ye, who bent beneath a heavy load
Of years, lament your comrades gone before,
While you are left, still tottering on the road
You trod so manfully in days of yore,
O, what of Death? They answered: 'Evermore
We long for him. Our journey we would end.
He will be greeted as a welcome Friend.'

O, patient Saint! who in the dim-lit aisle
Dost daily kneel and reverently pray,
What thoughts have you of sullen Death, the
while
Your prayers before his Conqueror you lay?
'A Sleep is he, with waking unto Day,'

The girl replied; for she, through storm and grief,
Had never faltered in her firm belief.

Upon these answers silently I muse.
Rest, Foe, Friend, Sleep! Which shall I find thee, Death?
The time must come when thou wilt surely choose
Remorselessly to rob me of my breath.
But Faith, which all things dark illumineth,
Bids me not tremble when thy shadows fall;
Nor would I shun what comes alike to all!

RETROSPECT.

Before my mind I call
The misty waterfall,
The pine trees, straight and tall,
The music in the glade
By wind and branches made,
The tender autumn sunshine over all.

A sound is in the air,
As, in a quiet square
Off some great thoroughfare
Dull is the traffic's roar,
So, on the pebbly shore
Far distant moans the ocean in its lair.

Boughs fan us over-head;
Fir-needles, 'neath our tread
Are on the moss outspread.
No one unwished-for here!
Just I, and one most dear;
And all around us, heather, purple-red.

I feel that places die
(Save in my memory)
When I no more am by,
And vanish into air,
Because I am not there
To prove their being with delighted eye.

The place is still the same.
Forgotten is my name.
Ah, Absence! yours the blame!
My youth, alas! has fled,
And Love and Hope are dead,
Yet seem to linger round the path she came.

Ah, gentle Egotist!
Where these dark branches twist,
'Twas there where first we kissed.
We parted. Soon was stilled
Thy grief! My place was filled
While I rejoiced in thinking I was missed.

Now I have learnt to know
That it is seldom so,
For people ebb and flow,
And few can leave a trace
Which Time will not efface
As it had never been, when once they go.

Live in the present day!
The past is flown away,
And who can safely say
What future hours will bring?
'Tis vain imagining!
For naught is certain but that heads grow
grey!

HELEN AT THE PIANO.

When Helen plays we all forget
That fingers fly;
No thought of labour comes to fret
The harmony.
For Music, whom she lightly woos,
Leaves Heaven's ways
And Earth with melody endues,
When Helen plays.

ON MEETING A FRIEND AFTER A LONG ABSENCE.

I MET a friend but yesterday,
An unexpected meeting.
I would have passed upon my way
Without a word of greeting.

She stopped me with a glad surprise,
Recalled our day of parting,
Pleased recognition in her eyes;
In mine the tears were starting.

For we should live with those we love,
Or else should view them blindly,
Lest when we meet perchance it prove
Time uses them unkindly!

STORMY YOUTH.

O! IF our sky be overcast when Life should all
be bright,
If Winter chills our youthful days and robs us of
delight,
And if our childish footsteps should be placed in
thorny ways,
Let us take heart! For Summer-time may come
with later days.

The fairest, calmest evenings often follow morn-
ings wild,
And agèd feet walk flow'ry paths untrodden by
the child.
But O! I pray for Summer before my blood runs
cold,
For snows go best with hoary hair. May sun-
shine gild the gold!

THE CHILD AND THE LOVER.

Companions in Sorrow.

Baby, in rapture,
Saw a wasp creeping;
Longed for its capture!
Now he is weeping.

Wond'ring, admiring,
Did he behold it.
Fingers, desiring,
Stretched to enfold it.

Grief and confusion
Followed the taking.
Gone the illusion,
Tearful the waking!

Venomed stings darting,
Reach not thee only.
I, too, am smarting;
Thou art not lonely.

Ah! but thy fretting
Ceases to-morrow.
There's no forgetting,
Baby, *my* sorrow!

Agatha charmed me!
Ask me not whether
Now she has harmed me.
Let's weep together!

TO-DAY AND YESTERDAY.

WHAT doth divide to-day from yesterday?
One little night?
A few short hours when Phœbus was away,
Beyond our sight?

Ah, no! It is a gulf, both deep and wide,
That lies between,
'Cross which we see upon the other side,
Joy that has been!

ON SEEING THE FIGURE-HEAD OF A SHIP IN A GARDEN.

FAIR maid, who rode upon the prow,
Your roving life you surely miss!
For roses shed their petals now
On lips the Ocean used to kiss.

Regret you not the days gone by,
When, rending veils of spray in twain,
You climbed the waves towards the sky,
Then downward plunged to rise again?

O'er angry seas or ripples blue,
Towards your end you steadfast pressed,
And ever smiled, as now you do,
In this embowered, enforcèd rest.

Straight forward! (With the stars to guide),
Like you I fain through life would go.
Alas! how oft I turn aside,
And veer with all the winds that blow!

THE UNATTAINABLE.

'FAINT of heart are we, and weary,
And the pathway, aye ascending
To the peaks above, is dreary,
And to us appears unending,
Happy ones, who overcome it,
Tell us, when you gain the summit,
What horizon now delights you,
And for all your toil requites you?'

The answer reached us: 'Ne'er despond,
For we, like you, see heights beyond.'

UNASKED.

I LOVED her first long years ago,
More child than woman and most sweet.
Long tangled locks the wind did blow;

Her skirts disclosed her dainty feet,
Earth seemed a white enchanted land,
That happy, vanished Christmastide.
I held in mine her warm, soft hand,
And skated swiftly by her side,
Till stars lit up the skies above.
That time I never can forget!
'Too young is she to think of Love,'
I said; 'I must not ask her yet.'

I loved her more as years rolled by.
No maiden could with her compare.
What thoughts behind her brow did lie,
Half shyly she with me would share,
Sweet fancies and imaginings,
As slow we drifted down the stream.
Those summer days went by with wings;
I feared to end the golden dream.
And when at last I tried to speak,

Ah, me! I never can forget
The startled blush upon her cheek.
She said, 'O, do not ask me yet!'

I waited. Then the autumn came.
The corn was gathered, fields lay brown,
The woodland trees were all aflame,
And leaves, reluctant, fluttered down.
Now Winter's here! O'er hill and plain
Falls thickly, silently, the snow,
Recalling vividly again
That happy Christmas long ago.

* * * *

But pillowed soft, mid blossoms white,
My Sweet lies dead! Can I forget
My only Love, my lost Delight?
Alas! I have not asked her yet!

PLEASURE.

PLEASURE is a true woman. That I'll swear!
Become her slave, and like a dog she'll treat you.
Though day and night you follow everywhere,
She'll turn away and ne'er will kindly greet you.

But should you leave pursuit and let her be,
Ignore the unrelenting one completely,
Forget her, if you can,—ah! then you'll see
How unexpectedly she smiles! how sweetly!

TO AN OLD UMBRELLA.

CANST count the days, old friend of mine,
That thou hast dry and idle lain?
Think not that it is always fine
Because I use thee not in rain!

Rememb'rest thou the last Spring shower
We braved together? Hast forgot
That swiftly-fleeting golden hour
When storm and wind I heeded not?

Whom overtook we at the gate?
Didst feel, my friend, how quickly sped
My heart, with the glad thought elate
That I should hold thee o'er her head?

I took her in beneath thy shade,
And all too short I found the way.
She thanked me sweetly for my aid;
It was a happy rainy day.

Rest, dear old friend, and idle be!
Thou shalt be nevermore unfurled.
Thou art a sacred thing to me,
Since thou hast sheltered all my world!

HER VOICE.

She sang to us as sings a bird,
From out her heart!
She sought not praise from those who heard,
Betrayed no art.
Impersonal and exquisite
A thing apart,
Her voice could charm to pure delight,
Or make tears start.

It set vibrating chords, amid
The part that lies,
Too oft 'neath littlenesses hid
From others' eyes.
Those springs of thought and love so deep,
'Tis sweet surprise,
When music calls them from their sleep,
And bids them rise!

DEATH'S LESSON.

WEEP not in bitter despair,
O'er one who awhile lingers near you.
Vex not with impotent pray'r
The ear which no longer can hear you.

Ah! but the mem'ry endures,
Though flown past recall the word spoken.
Cruel that last speech of yours,
And cruel this silence unbroken!

Never, ah, never again
A sign from the vanished can reach you!
Let not your sorrow be vain,
But learn what Death only can teach you.

Would you atone to the Dead?
Then, poor mortal failings forgiving,
Dry all those salt tears you shed,
And tenderly deal with the Living!

TO A LITTLE CHILD.

Thou art so new to earth,
Its sorrows and its mirth;
Thou art so lately come
To make with us thy home,
That in thy wond'ring eyes,
Both innocent and wise,
There lingers still a light,
Thy soul brought on its flight,
From out the Infinite.

RENUNCIATION.

RARE and lonely mind,
Higher than its kind,
Who, too late, doth find
One that is akin;
Who, in sheer delight,
With this soul takes flight
To an unknown height,
O'er the world's dull din;

Yet renounces this,
Purest of all bliss,
And all joy doth miss
True to Duty's bond;
Patient, walks the plain,
Loyal, hiding pain.
You shall soar again!
There's a Heav'n beyond!

A YOUNG MOTHER TO HER CHILD.

My new Delight! The future lies before thee.
Yet to the vanished past when watching o'er thee,
My thoughts are backward turning,
With sad and tender yearning,
The while I press thee to me, hold thee fast,
And know myself more blest this year than last,
For then thou wert not here,
So lately art thou come, O, Babe most dear!

But should I not look forward, rather, sweetest,
To childhood's joys and boyish days, the fleetest?
Then youth and manhood's story
Of honour, truth, and glory?
And pray that I may set thee in the ways
That lead thee highest and to God give praise,
As I my heart uplift,
In thankfulness for thee, His latest gift?

Ah, no! I think of days, now fled for ever,
When I, a thoughtless child, with no endeavour
Won (purest of all blisses)
My Mother's gentle kisses,
Nor guessed the measure then of such delight.
But now a veil has fallen from my sight.
Thou, with unconscious art,
Hast brought appreciation to my heart.

My little first-born and my long-dead Mother
For evermore are linked to one another.
Child! thou to me hast given
A message out of Heaven.
And knowest not that thou hast made me weep.
Yet why! Love's Kingdom is so wide and
deep,
There time can hold no sway.
My Mother's love to thee will I repay!

LONDON SPRING.

THERE is a time when town is fair,
When Spring, in pity for the fate
Of trees close pent within the square,
Clothes them in buds most delicate,

Which gleam like dazzling fairy gems
(What emeralds with them compare?)
Against the smoke-begrimèd stems,
Black with the Winter's long despair.

The dismal branches look like death,
Yet burst to life most fair indeed.
Spring kisses them with tend'rer breath
Than their sweet sisters of the mead!

TO E——, WHO DIED YOUNG.

I CANNOT follow where you led,
But weary-hearted,
I tell myself that you are dead,
And we are parted.

Why should you pay the penalty
For Adam's sinning?
Death at the end of life should be,
Not the beginning!

Were I again your form to see,
I should not wonder.
Far stranger is the thought that we
Are now asunder.

No willing feet across the hall
Now run to meet me.
Your little empty chair is all
I have to greet me.

I envy you your childish trust,
For mine is shaken.
I cannot think that God is just
Since you were taken.

One word from you would make me wise,
And ease my sighing.
In hopeless, endless silence lies
The sting of dying!

You heed me not! In days gone by
You'd answer gladly.
Oh, speak, my darling! Vainly I
Implore you sadly!

O! tell me: 'Death is only Sleep;
There is a waking.'
That certainty alone will keep
My heart from breaking!

A WALK IN MARCH.

THERE is this that's rare in you,
Yellow daffodil!
Beautiful and common too!
Let us pick our fill.
Bright Spring flower! The wind may
blow,
You will flourish still.
Who will take me where you grow
Underneath the hill?

O! to go on such a quest,
Mary, by my side!
Surely man was never blessed
With a sweeter guide!
And the hill was all too near,
Though the dale was wide.
High above a lark sang clear
Praises glorified!

O! that we might wander thus
All alone, we two,
With that singing rained on us
From the distant blue.
Roaming ever, hand in hand,
Rich green meadows through.
Then this earth were fairyland.
Would the dream were true!

First, a grassy field we crossed,
Where the colts at play,
Manes and tails all tempest-tossed
Galloped 'cross our way.
Mary looked as free a thing,
And as wild as they.
March winds are dishevelling,
Sweet her dis-array!

What the colour of her hair
Blown about her head?
Where the sunlight touched it, there
Bright it gleamed and red.
One long lock all out of place,
Soft as silken thread,
Laid itself across my face,
By the wind outspread.

Then beside a stile we stood,
(Stiff it was and high.)
Aid she would not have; she could
Climb as well as I!
But I took her hand so slight,
Which in mine did lie,
And I helped her to alight
In the field of rye.

And the thanks she softly paid
Did my heart beguile.
O! to think such slender aid
Won me such a smile!
O! to hold her hand again
Was my thought the while.
Vainly did I search the plain
For another stile!

Then we reached the wood. Above
All the air was loud
Where the building rooks made love,
Like a sable cloud,
Shutting out the morning sun,
They so close did crowd.
Happy birds, whose mates are won
So should I be proud!

Daffodils beneath our feet,
On a bank of green,
Paved with gold this dark retreat,
Stately trees between.
Then began the sweetest toils
That have ever been,
Till we, homewards, with our spoils,
Wandered . . . . slave and Queen.

* * * *

Now I'm back in smoky town.
(She is far away.)
Outside, fog of dingy brown;
Inside, all is gay.
With her gift of yellow flowers,
Flowers we picked that day,
Dreams as golden fill my hours.
Like to fade as they!

SEQUEL.

A Walk in November.

We all had been at church on that November afternoon,
And Mary shared my hymn-book, and the hymn was done too soon.
And with the preacher's eloquence the people's hearts were stirred.
My heart was filled with her alone! I did not hear a word!
She sat so close beside me! You will say: 'In such a place
A man should think of other things, not of a woman's face.'
Perhaps.—And yet no saint adored by hosts of worshippers,
Could e'er have borne a purer soul in fairer frame than hers.

And when, the service o'er, we rose to sing the parting hymn,
The church was very dark; adown the aisle the lamps shone dim.
The white-robed choir-boys seemed to me like an angelic crowd
That sang to us poor sinners from out wreaths of mist and cloud.
The people all streamed out. We too, and when we reached the door,
Found darkness past belief, which stretched the silent city o'er.
Save groups about the portal, not a creature in the street,
No sound of rolling wheels we heard, nor tread of busy feet.

Her hand upon my arm I placed; her pilot would I be.
Familiar were the streets, and darkness was as light to me!

O, blessèd fog! How gratefully I thanked its sable pall
That wrapped us closely in its folds, and shut us out from all,
And gave me a just right to draw her little form so near,
While none could listen to our words, nor curious glances peer.
O! where on moor or mountain is a solitude more sweet
Than we two found together in a dingy London street?

'Twas wrong of me to keep her in that cold November air!
I've since confessed to her I took her three times round the square.
Each time we passed her house I trembled lest some watchful eye
Should penetrate the gloom and see who hurriedly went by!

Afraid was I to speak, and yet I could not bear
to part
Until I told my secret and laid bare to her my
heart.
I risked this sweetest friendship for the sake of
something more,
And I won her dear consent e'er I left her at
her door!

CONVERSATION AT A BALL,
BETWEEN A MATRON AND A BACHELOR FRIEND WHOM SHE HAS NOT SEEN FOR SOME YEARS.

He.—DEAR Friend, if you care not to dance,
And patiently sit by the wall,
Now, why do you go to a ball?
To show us your jewels, perchance?

She.—You wrong me! 'Tis not so at all.
Yet often I stifle a yawn,
And slowly the hours dawdle by,
Till I to my soft couch can hie,
When breaks of a new day the dawn.

He.—Then why are you here? Tell me why.

She.—At home, I've dear girls growing up.
I care not for dances, as such,
Frequent them for *their* sake; for much

'Twill sweeten their draught of Life's cup
If I with the world keep in touch.
Nor is it all vanity, no!
What's rotten can never endure,
And much in Society's pure,
Though more is the hollowest show,
Not worth all the effort, I'm sure.
And those who forsake it may miss
The grains of good corn in the chaff.
Below all the froth, oft we quaff
The wine of real friendship. Ah! this
Amuses you much, and you laugh.
Conceal not your smile, but look round
And face the full blaze of the light.
The fact that I met you to-night
Doth prove my philosophy sound.

He.—My Friend, I admit you are right.

PAGAN FANCIES.

I.

A Sacrifice to Æsculapius.

I watched a sacrifice to-day
To Æsculapius made,
And yet I wended not my way
Through classic grove or glade.

No pillared heathen temple trod
In wonderment and awe;
Beheld no statue of the god,
Nor gliding serpent saw.

No stately priest with mystic rite
Approached the kindling fire.
An English mother robed in white,
Laid victims on the pyre.

Her little child libations poured
Of tears from bluest eyes,
As round the playthings she adored
She saw the flames arise.

Dear toys! They cheered her in her
need,
When fever laid her low.
But Æsculapius has decreed
These faithful friends must go.

And now the Sacrifice is paid,
O, god of Health! I pray,
From this bereavèd little maid
Keep future ills away!

PAGAN FANCIES.

II.

Bacchus in the Dining-room.

A Bust, surviving from the doom
Of Greece, adorns the dining-room.
It gleams from out the corner's gloom,
With vine-encircled brow.
This marble Bacchus, still and cold,
Lamenting revelries of old,
Must from his pedestal behold
Our tamer feasting now.

A dinner-party! Guests eighteen.
(Some social stars.) How gay the sheen
Of silks and jewels, in between
The men in black and white.

How fair the flowers and bright the glass!
A menu France could ne'er surpass.
Yet all seem silent, dull, alas!
Are they not paired aright?

The weary host strives all in vain
With anecdote to entertain.
The lovely hostess feels the strain,
The sculptured god looks glum.
Champagne! Thy praise has oft been sung,
Thou genial spur to sluggish tongue,
Who makest old again feel young,
Quick, to the rescue, come!

Our friends who at the table sit,
Are none of them devoid of wit;
They wait for thee to waken it,
Thou sparkling king of wine.

And withered though their hearts may be,
They bloom in quick response to thee,
So fill the glasses, full and free,
That every one may shine.

Ah, magic change; no longer dearth
Of conversation. Cultured mirth
And kindly commonplace have birth,
The evening to beguile.
Can marble lips, so firmly set
For countless years their pose forget?
Impossible, in truth! And yet
On Bacchus' face . . . . a *smile!*

PAGAN FANCIES.

III.

The Death of Pan.

Deserted is Olympus now,
And clouds alone frequent its brow,
Save when, recalled by sun and rain,
Iris revisits it again.

Ah! where is now each pagan god,
Who once its slopes majestic trod?
Man's creatures they, yet halt divine
The hosts that thronged its lofty shrine.

For they were searchings after Truth,
In Earth's long-vanished, untaught youth.
They melted as the night away
Before the dawn of Christian Day.

Yet, hiding where the rivers ran,
Long years survived the shepherd Pan.
And those who heard his reedy note,
But thought it came from blackbird's throat.

Come, let me tell you how he died!
There rose, upon a river's side,
An Abbey grey, in northern clime.
From far, Pan watched the work sublime.

Through centuries he saw it grow.
'This Christian God I fain would know,'
He murmured, when the towers complete
Uprose the blue of Heaven to meet.

One evening, when the shadows fell,
He left the haunts he knew so well;
Unnoticed gained the Western door,
And, trembling, crossed the threshold o'er.

Within the Abbey stood, and gazed
By its solemnity amazed;

For it embodied praise and prayer!
A realised ideal was there.

Could mortal man, with solid stone
Those arches o'er the nave have thrown?
(For classic temples, known of yore,
Their roof inert and stable bore.)

Here, balanced thrust and mighty spring!
Stone needs must be a living thing,
Or how could vaulting interlace
High overhead, enclosing space?

He slowly paced the lengthy nave,
(His hoofs on many a Christian grave),
And gained the choir: wherein, with awe,
The giant organ-pipes he saw.

Soon, wonder melted in delight!
(Akin to his own pipes the sight.)
Then was his heart to rapture stirred;
A gentle Pastoral he heard.

What recked poor Pan of organist?
He drank the music in, nor wist
That human hand and human brain
Called into life that glorious strain.

No learnèd fugue, in fetters bound
Had touched him thus! The tuneful sound,
Which spoke of meadow, brook, and wood,
He wholly loved: half understood.

The Abbey now appeared to him,
A forest, dark, mysterious, dim,
Whose leafy branches, wide outspread,
Entwine and mingle overhead.

And where the moon, with radiance bright,
Threw on the floor her jewelled light.
It seemed to Pan he saw the gleam,
Upon a limpid, flowing stream.

Clear as the river, which of old
Through classic landscape swiftly rolled,

When he, with strong, yet gentle hand,
Helped wandering Psyche to the land.

He thought he saw his fleecy flocks
Go straying far amongst the rocks,
Until he charmed them with his strain
Back to the pastures green again!

Alas! the organ's wondrous sound,
He fancied in his pipes was found.
His bosom, with a strange delight,
Throbbed painfully that Summer night.

But when his eyes he downward bent,
And saw his simple instrument,
Which, in his hand, all silent lay,
The sweet illusion fled away.

A mother on a stricken child
Has ne'er with tend'rer pity smiled
Than Pan upon his pipes!—Then sighed
O'er what had lately been his pride.

He pressed them to his breaking heart,
And childish now he knew his art.
Regret, enchantment, awe, were all
Waked in him by that Pastoral.

Back to his reedy haunts he went,
With wonder and emotion spent.
And, e'er the day dawned rosy red,
The last great pagan god was dead.

And thus was slain the shepherd Pan,
By music born of Christian man,
The last of all Olympus' train;
And never can he rise again!

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